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## Viewing cable 09PORTAUPRINCE475, HAITI: PRESIDENT PREVAL ON ELECTIONS, CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

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### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

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**#09PORTAUPRINCE475.**

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">09PORTAUPRINCE475</a>	<a href="#">2009-05-12 17:39</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Port Au Prince</a>

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.haiti-liberte.com/archives/volume4-51/vendeur%20de%20drogue.asp>

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 000475

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/02/2019

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SUBJECT: HAITI: PRESIDENT PREVAL ON ELECTIONS, CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

PORT AU PR 00000475 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson. Reason: E.O. 12958 1.4 (b), (d)

Summary

11. (C) President Preval says that the April 19 Senate elections were well organized. He claims to have expected the low turnout, but admitted that the Fanmiz Lavalas boycott, associated threats, and the ban on public transportation deterred many voters. The President was pleased at the strong showing of Lespwa candidates and the weak showing of supporters of Senator Yourie Latortue, and conceded that this election was already setting the stage for the Presidential contest in 2010-2011. He doubted Haiti would be able to hold the next round of legislative elections by the end of this year. Preval stated that constitutional reform should proceed in small steps, first addressing double nationality and the balance of power between the legislative and executive branches. The President also asked for help in obtaining evidence to prosecute Fourel Celestin, an associate of former President Aristide whom the U.S. deported to Haiti April 30 after serving a drug sentence. End summary.

Senatorial Elections

12. (C) The Ambassador called on President Preval May 4 to discuss recent Senatorial elections and plans to amend the constitution. The President said the April 19 Senate elections had gone well and were well organized -- especially considering conditions in Haiti. He claimed not to have expected a turnout higher than 12-15 percent. Preval's main concern, he said, was preserving unity within the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP), Haiti's election authority, since councilors in this body came from varying political constituencies.

13. (C) The President conceded that in future elections, including the upcoming second round, public transportation should be allowed to operate and that voters should be given more accurate information about the location of their polling places. Preval said he wanted the re-run of first-round voting in the Center Department (Note: where the voting was halted due to violence - End Note) held before the June 7 runoff elections so that there would be a single set of runoffs nationwide. (Note: the runoff will almost certainly be postponed. See septel. End note.) However, judicial investigations into the violence in the Center Department must run their course. Ensuring the 'rule of law' and making sure that violators -- Preval mentioned the UCADDE candidate in the Center Department Willot Joseph -- did not enjoy impunity was more important than the election itself.

14. (C) Preval brought up the dispute over the result in the North Department, in which Lespwa candidate Jean Charles Moise claimed he had won a first-round absolute majority, although the initial results gave him 49.49 percent. Preval said that blank votes had been counted incorrectly in this case. (Note: the CEP has since awarded Moise just over 50 percent of the vote, making him the only candidate to avoid a runoff - septel. End note.) Preval admitted that the Fanmiz Lavalas 'Closed Door' boycott campaign as well as the circulation of leaflets threatening voters with physical harm had kept many in the West Department (which includes Port-au-Prince) at home. Many others had voted 'no candidate.' Preval claimed, unconvincingly, that this proved that Fanmiz Lavalas was not strong in the Port-au-Prince slums.

15. (C) Asked about the political result of the elections, Preval expressed satisfaction with the good results for Lespwa. He was also pleased that candidates of Senator Yourie Latortue's 'Haiti in Action' party had fared poorly.

(Note: they finished lower than second in four departments. Only one, in Latortue's stronghold of the Artibonite Department, came in second to qualify for the runoff. End note.) The President was confident that the losers would not find the votes in the Senate to block newly-elected Senators from being seated. He agreed with the Ambassador that many candidates viewed this election as a platform to position themselves for the 2010 Presidential elections.

16. (C) Preval then said it was time to 'reflect' on next steps. He expressed doubt that Haiti could hold the next set of legislative elections in November, only four months after the new Senators take their seats in July. Haiti, he said, must respect the constitution while also preserving stability.

#### Amending the Constitution

17. (C) Asked about his efforts to amend the constitution, Preval said this was a delicate process. He hoped to dispel the widespread suspicion that his ulterior motive was to allow himself a third term. Preval declared that he would pursue constitutional reform by way of 'small adjustments.'

The first steps would be to address dual nationality, prohibited under the current constitution, and balance the powers of the legislative and executive branches. He pointed out that under the current constitution, a mere 9 Senators can override a Presidential veto. The President appoints but cannot dismiss the Prime Minister.

#### Crime Issues

18. (C) He also asked that the U.S. provide evidence to help Haiti build a case against Fourel Celestin, whom the U.S. deported to Haiti April 30 after he served a sentence for drug trafficking. (Note: Celestin was President of the Senate and Director General of the Haitian National Police at various times during the Presidency of Jean Bertrand Aristide. End note.) Preval declared that Celestin must be tried in Haiti. He hoped the U.S. could tell Haiti who in the Haitian National Police had helped Celestin in his narcotics transactions. Authorities could not detain Celestin indefinitely. Preval said that the release of Celestin -- and others the U.S. might deport soon, such as former HNP Chief Jean Nesly Lucien and former Presidential security chief Oriel Jean -- would be 'catastrophic.' (Note: Preval against raised this along the fringes of his meeting with Codel Hirono and in a subsequent call to the Ambassador. End note)

#### Comment

19. (C) Preval tried to put the best face on an election that saw very low turnout in the capital, sporadic violence, and a boycott by a significant party which had all its candidates disqualified by the election authority. These were Preval's first remarks to the Embassy that he views Artibonite Senator Youri Latortue -- whose Presidential ambitions are thinly veiled -- as a political threat. He gave no indication of concern about accusations that Lespwa candidates received under-the-table financial and logistical campaign support from the government. This was also the first indication from Preval that he supports gradual amendment of the constitution, not drafting a brand new one.

SANDERSON